What Is Bothering You?

Take the time to interview friends, family, neighbors, teachers, and community leaders in order to gather insights into the problems that matter most to them. These individuals may not know about public policy or spheres of society, and that is fine. What is important is that by engaging in these conversations, you will gain a deeper understanding of the issues and their impact, helping you identify meaningful solutions. Let us get started by uncovering what is bothering members of your community.

Instructions

1. Exploring the needs of the community includes seeking feedback from caregivers and community members. Think of a trusted adult who you would like to interview about an issue that is bothering them.

2. To set up your interview, you can ask someone in person, on the phone, or even through a text message whether they are available to talk. You could say:
   - *Hey [name]! Are you available to speak with me briefly about a community issue that is impacting you? I am beginning a project about the role of public policy in my community and how I can become civically engaged. I want to get an idea of some of the public issues around me before I start my research on anything in particular.*

3. Once you have an interviewee, your interview can start with a simple question:
   - *What is a community issue that is bothering you right now?*

4. Listen to see whether their issue is more in the private, civil, or government sphere. If you need to clarify whether the issue is related to public policy or a lack of public policy, feel free to ask these questions:
   - What do you think is causing this problem?
   - Do you think this problem could be dealt with by the government, civic groups, or by private individuals?

5. Ask follow-up questions about issues they have experienced or observed:
   - Why is this topic a problem?
   - Do others in your community see this as a problem too?
   - How long has the problem existed?
   - Who is impacted by this problem?

6. Fill out the graphic organizer below by listing the problems you and your interviewee have identified, providing a brief description for each, and listing examples gathered from your interview.

7. Consider which government agencies at the local, state, or national levels might be responsible for addressing these problems.

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Section 1: Community-Member Interview

Name or title of person you interviewed

What is the person's relationship to you and their role in the community (e.g., caregiver, community volunteer, businessperson, teacher, retired person)?

What is the issue bothering your interviewee?

Does this person think that others in the community believe this topic is an important problem too? Why or why not?

What does this person think are the causes of the problem, and how long has the problem existed?

Section 2: Exploring the Issue

Thinking about what you have learned in your interview, take some time to learn more about the issue. Look up information online about the problem named by your interviewee. In this section of the form, write down what you find out.

1. Who should deal with this problem?
   ○ Government acting alone
   ○ Government with the assistance of civil society
   ○ Government with the assistance of the private sphere
   ○ Government with the assistance of civil society and the private sphere

   Explain your answer. (Note: If this is a problem that can only be dealt with by civil society or the private sphere, this will not be a good topic for Project Citizen.)

2. What policy, if any, is already in place to deal with this problem?
   Does it need to be replaced? Why?

3. What levels, branches, or agencies of government are responsible or should be responsible for dealing with the problem?